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The War Against Sex Trafficking: Who Is Fighting?

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The War Against Sex Trafficking:

Who Is Fighting?

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Dedicated to my mother, who taught me that each person
has inherent value and worth that deserves to be fought for.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes and relays information collected from a series of interviews with anti-trafficking organizations in Nepal. The organizations included are Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), Maiti-Nepal, Saathi Nepal, Tiny Hands Nepal, and Women's Rehabilitation Centre Nepal (WOREC). Each organization approaches the fight against sex trafficking differently. This paper breaks down the methods of addressing sex trafficking into three main categories: prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation. In addition to this, other articles and resources on this topic are explored to explain the enablers of sex trafficking in Nepal. A cross-analysis is conducted between the various anti-trafficking methods used by organizations within Nepal and research done on the breakdown of these methods, in order to optimize and enhance the current methods in use.

Keywords: sex trafficking, anti-trafficking organizations, anti-trafficking methods

Anti-Trafficking Organizations in Nepal

Nepal is the largest source of women and girls in the South Asian sex trafficking industry, with around 12,000 being trafficked each year to India alone (Deane, 2010). Trafficking, especially to this magnitude, exacerbates the pre-existing issues of gender discrimination and poverty found in Nepal, while also robbing these women of their value, rights, and livelihood. However, to fight this, a number of INGOs and NGOs have emerged in the battle by implementing preventative programs, border control, rescue missions, rehabilitation and skills-building programs, etc.

Even with the work and prevalence of numerous anti-trafficking organizations, the issue of trafficking continues to exist and is still an extremely rampant and pervasive issue. Why are the numbers of enslaved women still so high, if there are so many different entities, resources and hands helping to fight against it? Throughout the research process I worked with five anti-trafficking organizations in Nepal to understand this issue; namely, Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), Maiti-Nepal, Saathi Nepal, Tiny Hands Nepal, and Women's Rehabilitation Centre Nepal (WOREC).

My research aims to understand the missions and methods used by these organizations, revolving around their prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation of the women and children directly affected by the sex trafficking industry. Similarities and parallels among the organizations will be drawn through analysis. Further investigation of my findings and research on sex trafficking as a general topic will also give potential practical areas of improvement for the fight against trafficking within Nepal. This research will shed light on the ever-growing sex trafficking industry in Nepal and give a comprehensive overview of these organizations and their methods of fighting against sex trafficking.

Research Questions

Why is sex trafficking so prevalent in Nepal today, and what factors abet in its growth?

What are the preventative, rescue, and rehabilitation methods employed by anti-trafficking organizations in Nepal?

What improvement, based on analysis of the methods employed by anti-trafficking organizations in Nepal, past research done on this topic, and general observations of Nepal, can be made in the fight against sex trafficking?

Literature Review

The trafficking of girls and women for sexual exploitation is the fastest growing illegal industry in the world, third largest behind illegal drugs and black market arms trade (Deane, 2010). Nepal, in particular, is the most exploited country for women and children as the source of this trafficking in South Asia (Deane, 2010). Although there are numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) fighting against this ever-growing industry, mitigations in the impacts of the industry have been slight compared to its ongoing growth. This paper will outline the leading causes of the Nepali sex trafficking industry, what happens to women within its confines, what methods are used to rescue and rehabilitate these women, and what issues (post-trafficking) these women regularly face.

One of the largest national enablers of such high levels of sex trafficking was the turmoil and large displacements of people brought on during the Maoist insurgency. Crawford's book explains that, although the mass amounts of migration were not necessarily the cause of the trend of sex trafficking within Nepal, it created the right soil for it to burgeon:

Sex trafficking likely increased...due to the vulnerability of migrants and internally displaced people... Trafficking increases when poverty and desperation are exacerbated

by destroyed economics. Moreover, the breakdown of law and order during conflict...creates an environment where trafficking of girls and women can flourish...Migration increases the risk of trafficking because it separates women from support systems (Crawford, 2012).

The violence of this time period caused many women to be separated from their communities and families, which left them in a very vulnerable position to be trafficked. Mass amounts of women went across the border to India to flee the turmoil, in search of security and jobs.

Furthermore, the desperation for a financial income pushed many women into sex work out of necessity, subsequently increasing their susceptibility to trafficking during the insurgency. Not only that, the violence broke down the natural order of things, including border control and safety, enabling the ease of the illegal transport of women and children to and from India. The cruel intentions of these traffickers were easily brought to fruition: “In fact, traffickers often use routes through countries or regions in conflict for this very reason” (Crawford, 2012). The insurgency brought to light several key factors that abetted in the rapid growth of the sex trafficking industry: an open border (with little security), displacement from support of families and community, and poverty.

In Nepal, 42% of the people live below the poverty line (Deane, 2010). As a result, a large portion of Nepal’s GDP come from remittances – 30% of Nepal’s GDP is directly from its citizens sending money home to their families from their work abroad (Deane, 2010). This 30%, combined with the amount of international aid that Nepal receives, puts almost 50% of its GDP coming from outside of its borders. So, while forced abduction into sex trafficking is still an issue, it is more frequently that women are coerced and tricked into these positions by false promises of marriage or work abroad. Generally, the trafficker (increasingly more women are

playing this role) will build up rapport and trust with the woman, then offer a fake job (usually in India, Sri Lanka or the Middle East). This is a growing problem with educated women as well, because of the lack of jobs in Nepal – even education does not ensure financial stability. Another common means of deception is offering fake marriage to women. These methods are effective, because they offer a way out of a life of poverty for the women, while also granting them the false sense of being able to send money home to their families. “The trafficking process in Nepal ...is characterized by four methods of trafficking: through brokers, independent migration to urban areas, deception or false marriage, and force/abduction” (Dahal, 2015). It is estimated that 12,000 girls and women (an average age between 12-18) are trafficked to India each year (Deane, 2010). Moreover, the perpetual gender discrimination found in Nepal, stemming from a pervasive patriarchal mindset, puts women, especially impoverished women, in a place of lesser power and social stature, and thus at a direct disadvantage to be taken control of – especially in the sex trafficking industry. Once women are in the sex trafficking industry, it is very difficult for them to leave and be truly liberated.

The United States Department of State defined Nepal as a Tier 2 country in their 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report, which has been the case since 2011. The definition of a Tier 2 country is, “Countries whose governments do not fully meet the...minimum standards, [as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000], but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards” (US Department of State, 2018; *brackets mine*). The report cited Nepal’s improvements as increased law enforcement, including increased arrests and convictions of perpetrators, more investigations into allegations against traffickers and [corruption from] Nepali officials, and a number of new shelters, rehabilitation centers and community-based havens for victims of trafficking built in the past year (US Department of

State, 2018; *brackets mine*). While these are steps in the right direction for Nepal, there are still quite a few areas that are in need of reform and growth. The same report defines them as follows:

Its laws do not prohibit all forms of forced labor and sex trafficking and it continued to lack standard operating procedures (SOPs) on victim identification and referral to rehabilitation services...Official complicity in trafficking offenses remained a serious problem due to both direct complicities in trafficking crimes as well as negligence. Many government officials continued to lack understanding of trafficking. Officials encouraged migrant workers who experienced exploitation abroad to register cases under the Foreign Employment Act (FEA), which criminalized fraudulent recruitment, rather than notify police of labor exploitation, and prosecutors frequently declined to charge a case under the trafficking law if it had already been charged under the FEA, despite the difference in crimes. The government maintained its policies preventing female migration in several ways, and observers continued to report the revised policies led women to use illegal methods to migrate, which subsequently increased their vulnerability to human trafficking (US, 2018).

The United States adheres to the UN's definition of human trafficking, seen below in Figure 1, and gives Nepal international funds for the cessation of human trafficking. This money is given with the condition that Nepal continues to "[make] significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with [the set standards]" as defined by their yearly Trafficking in Persons Report (US Department of State 2018; *brackets mine*).

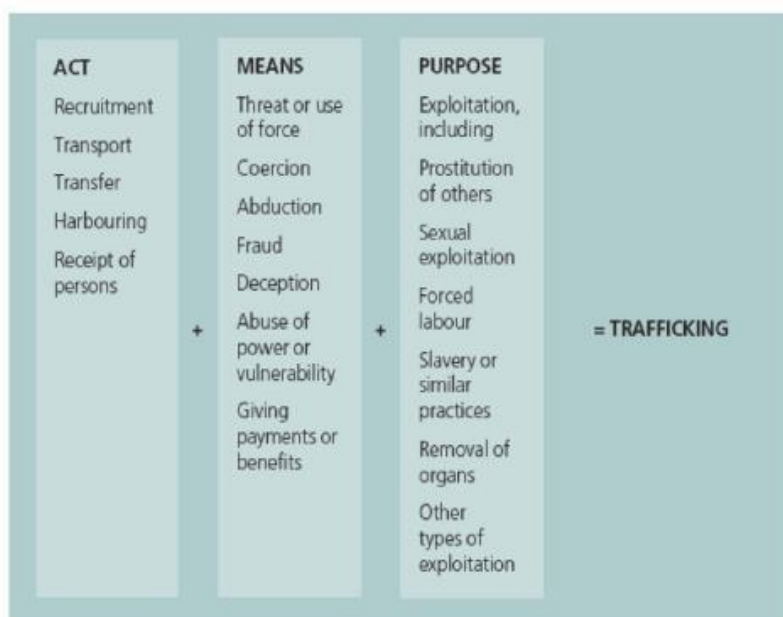


Figure 1. Flowing definition of various forms of human trafficking, as defined, altered, and adopted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Source adapted from: (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

As aforementioned, the sex trafficking industry has continued to proliferate. A major reason for this is a growing demand for cheap labor, and thus a growing demand for people (on the basis of the more general definition of human trafficking); however, more often with women this demand's purpose is sexual. In Kathmandu valley alone, 40,000 women are forced into the massage industry, expected to grant sexual favors to customers on top of their regular labor (Deane, 2010). Moreover, corruption within Nepal's state, travel and police departments make the transport of women into these lives of slavery easy for traffickers, because of so many bureaucrats working on their behalves. In addition to this corruption, the open border between India and Nepal has very little security for Nepali and Indian populations and India is South Asia's largest source destination of illegally trafficked persons – a large portion of these people coming from Nepal. This leads to limited amounts of involvement in preventing this step of

trafficking by the Nepali border police, and this lack of involvement places the burden of border and transit monitoring on anti-trafficking INGOs and NGOs.

Once these women are taken, any form of identification or documentation is stolen (and thus any chance of escape). They are transferred, usually sold into brothels where they are subjected to intense physical abuse, forced abortions, and repeated rape; if the women do not adhere to the strict rules imposed on them, they are subjugated to severe punishment (Deane, 2010). During this time, many women reported having extreme suicidal tendencies and being pushed into sexual acts against their will anywhere between seven and twenty-five times a day (Dahal, 2015). Oftentimes women will also leave these horrible conditions with diseases or in a very weak and sick state; some women, even decades after their liberation, struggle with physical ailments from their time in the brothels (HIV, in particular) (Dahal, 2015). Since the women are seen as a commodity, they will often be traded to other brothels or buyers, dependent on their owner's desire to make a profit or desire to get rid of a woman who is not malleable or compliant.

Another health issue that many of these women face, that rarely discussed or addressed in research, is alcoholism. Although these women are frequently informed of the long-term effects of drinking copious amounts of alcohol daily by social workers and doctors, they see this as the only cure to the pain that a life of sex trafficking brings (Karandikar, et al., 2016). "...the women rationalized the addiction as alcohol was their singular coping mechanism for the suffering they were enduring in their daily lives" (Karandikar, et al., 2016). Women in sex trafficking will frequently spend any earnings from their work on alcohol, focusing on the day-to-day reprieve rather than long-term health.

Most times, freedom for these women comes from police raids. “For most of the trafficking survivors, rescue from the sex industry occurred through police raids, help from clients, or captors releasing the survivors due to age, health conditions, or debt clearance” (Dahal, 2015). Even though these women are freed from the physical institution of slavery, the lasting chains of scarred mental health, familial and social shaming, and lack of marketable skills (job training), remain. In a multitude of cases, women coming out of trafficking will find solace in an NGO that provides rehabilitation, post-rescue. However, this rehabilitation is predominantly geared to help in the short-term, and after around three months of counseling and skills-building, these women are sent out for reintegration into society; women have reported they do not feel fully equipped for re-entry into the public eye (Dahal, 2015). This is due mainly to the stigma surrounding women forced into sex trafficking: survivors at large are shamed and shunned by their families, making reintegration into society incredibly hard, painful, and near impossible. A large part of this is due to the fatalistic view embedded deeply in the culture of Nepal (which is deduced through general observation of their norms and traditions, particularly Hinduism). This fatalistic lens expresses the idea that victims are where they are because it has been predetermined as their lot in life. This reason, paired with a widespread lack of education, pushes women to choose to live far away from their homes. Frequently, they must resort to manual labor for money; a number of women also return to prostitution for means of survival, as they see it (and to some degree as it is imposed on them by society) as their only option for income (Dahal, 2015).

A perpetual cycle of oppression and trafficking continues to rage, a thief stealing these victim’s livelihoods, sense of worth, and freedom. Although it seems unconquerable, there are some obvious (albeit still very difficult) things that can be implemented to disempower and

shrink the sex trafficking industry in Nepal. The first: a closed border between Nepal and India. As of now, Nepali citizens are free to cross with scarcely any monitoring. Where there is monitoring, corruption often ensues, and suddenly a very suspicious situation can be overlooked for a small sum of money. With more rigorous stipulations at border checkpoints for all people (not just those that do not look Nepali or Indian) and a system of accountability among the border police to mitigate corruption, more of these cases would be stopped before the victims are exploited at their destination. This system would help to rescue women before being sold to a brothel, and heighten the likelihood of catching the guilty party. Another change would be put in place long-term solutions for these women; perhaps, something allowing those released from a life of trafficking to become proficient in the livelihoods their villages provide, or an organization solely geared towards providing a full secondary education that would give deep-rooted investment into these victims, equipping them for secure jobs. Finally, the stigma around these women in society must change; no human should ever be ostracized for a choice stolen from them. For this issue, no immediate solution presents itself, but it remains of utmost importance. As pervasive and continual as this issue has been and still is today, change must be implemented, the goal to eradicate sex trafficking must be made a priority, and freedom must be fought for.

Method

Participants

At the close of the research, five anti-trafficking organizations in total were represented in the study. They were as follows: Maiti-Nepal, Tiny Hands, Saathi, WOREC, and CWIN. Every organization referred me to someone with whom to conduct the interview; most people held an administrative position in the logistical side of anti-trafficking. I was unable to choose

with whom I wanted to speak or whom I wanted to interview, although I did reach out to the same participant if multiple interviews were conducted with an organization. I interviewed two men and three women, all between the ages of 25 and 40. All of the participants were from Nepal, with the exception of Tiny Hands' representative as this participant was from the United States.

Materials

For the interviews, I used a tape recorder (if consent was given) to ensure integrity of transcription, and a preset list of questions for each organization. The questions used are as follows:

Between preventative measures, rescue, and rehabilitation, what is your organization's main focus?

Why is this your main focus?

What population(s) do you mainly focus on helping, within the sex trafficking industry?

What methods do you use in preventing sex trafficking?

What methods do you use in rescuing people from sex trafficking?

What methods do you use in rehabilitating people after rescuing them from sex trafficking?

In rehabilitation, do you focus on mental health, legal issues, skills-building and education, or something else?

What do you find is the greatest contributor to sex trafficking today?

What is the largest obstacle in carrying out your mission?

How do you overcome this obstacle?

What are a few of your practical goals for the foreseeable future?

What are the stats from the past 10 years that your organization has collected on sex trafficking within Nepal?

Procedure

To begin with, I researched the leading anti-trafficking organizations in Nepal, finding Maiti-Nepal to be the largest at present. So, I reached out to Maiti-Nepal, conducting a walk-in interview with a representative. After my initial interview with Maiti-Nepal, I was referred to several other organizations. This trend continued – as I conducted more interviews, I was referred to more organizations. The exception to this is Tiny Hands; a friend referred me to them upon hearing about my research.

During the interviews, I followed the questions listed above, following up and expanding on the areas in which each organization put their most investment. Each interview was 30-50 minutes long. I transcribed each of the interviews at their close, to be used in this research. I have analyzed them, organizing them based on their various approaches to prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation. I have compared and contrasted their parallels, similarities, and differences. In my analysis, I have made informed notes on areas of improvement/problems found within the realm of fighting against trafficking within Nepal as a whole, and have also laid out issues facing each organization that was involved in my study.

Ethical Guidelines

My research did not involve the participation of any children or vulnerable populations. I conducted a total of seven interviews with the aforementioned organizations, speaking with someone working for these organizations, but never directly interacting with a victim of trafficking; I conducted, at most, two interviews with any given organization. I conducted all of the interviews myself, receiving verbal or written consent (in the form of a signed consent form

or email) to conduct the interview. I also received consent for the ability to quote and record the interview. I did not directly quote any specific person interviewed, but rather the organization that they represent. If any question made the participants uncomfortable for any reason, they had the freedom to not answer it. Any audio transcripts of interviews are kept on my personal laptop and protected by a password. These transcripts will be deleted after five years have passed from the start date of my research. If these transcripts are needed for further research after this paper has been published, the participants will be contacted prior to any use. Furthermore, my research proposal was reviewed and approved by the International Review Board prior to being conducted.

Research Findings

Overview of Organizations

CWIN.

CWIN was established in 1987 with the intent of being a spokes-organization for the children of Nepal. “As a watchdog in the field of child rights, CWIN acts as a voice of children through lobbying, campaigning, and pressuring the government to protect and promote children’s rights in the country” (CWIN, 2006). It began as a vision by local university students, and in the thirty years since its germination, it has become one of the front-runners in the fight against trafficking. The organization focuses on prevention through its community educational programs, lobbying, and work in conjunction with the Child Helpline 1098.

Maiti-Nepal.

Maiti-Nepal was started in 1993 in order to campaign and fight against sex trafficking, also working against domestic violence and forced labor, for women and children. Since then, they have become the biggest anti-trafficking NGO in Nepal today, focusing on awareness campaigns, border monitoring, rescuing, and both short-term and long-term rehabilitation for women and children. Their mission is summed up in their 3Ps and 4Rs: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Repatriation.

Saathi Nepal.

Saathi Nepal was established in 1992, with its original intent focused on educating people about domestic violence and providing safety to women from being entrapped in cases of domestic violence. However, they began to expand their focus in 1998 to include victims of other forms of violence, including sex trafficking. They are a program-based organization, consistently running awareness campaigns, both in communities and in their shelters (where they house women and children). So, although their main focus is victims of domestic violence, they do interact with and house victims of sex trafficking, thus aiding in the battle of anti-trafficking in Nepal.

Tiny Hands Nepal.

Tiny Hands is an NGO working in Nepal, established in 2005. Part of Tiny Hand's mission statement is, "fighting the world's greatest injustices," which originally started as a way to provide family homes to orphaned or abandoned children living on the streets of Nepal. This has expanded to include one of the world's greatest injustices: sex trafficking. They focus on prevention through

border and transit monitoring, on the India-Nepal border, because they have found that this method has both a tangible impact on trafficking and is preventative by nature.

WOREC.

WOREC was established in 1991 as an anti-trafficking organization directly involved in preventing the trafficking of women and children. Today, however, WOREC is heavily involved in the promotion of women's rights as a whole, desiring to keep the focus of their mission on what they perceive is the core of the issue at hand: violation of women's rights. They do this through awareness programs, research, and lobbying, particularly for women's migration and labor rights.

Prevention

The overwhelming majority of the organizations interviewed focus their resources on preventative methods. For the purpose of my research, the category of prevention will be broken up into three main subcategories: border and transit monitoring, awareness programs, and advocating for these marginalized populations. Tiny Hands and Maiti-Nepal were the only two interviewed that mentioned border and transit monitoring. All of them, with the exception of Tiny Hands, pour a significant amount of their resources into the two remaining subcategories (awareness and advocating) of preventative methods.

In several interviews, five districts were mentioned as the largest source places for women from Nepal. This is due to two main (aforementioned) factors: they are poverty-stricken areas (especially when combined with having a large family) and they have a high density of Mongolians – however, other factors, such as a high population density, also contribute to this.

Most of the transit of Nepali people for the sex trafficking industry is to India; generally, people of Mongolian descent are preferred, because they “don’t look like a typical Nepali,” as several organizations made clear. Below, is a population density map of Nepal (Figure 2) and these main supply districts are noted by stars. The population density ranges from the most heavily populated districts shown by the darkest green, all the way to the least populated districts shown by the lightest blue. The districts’ names, from left to right, are Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchok, and Dolakha.

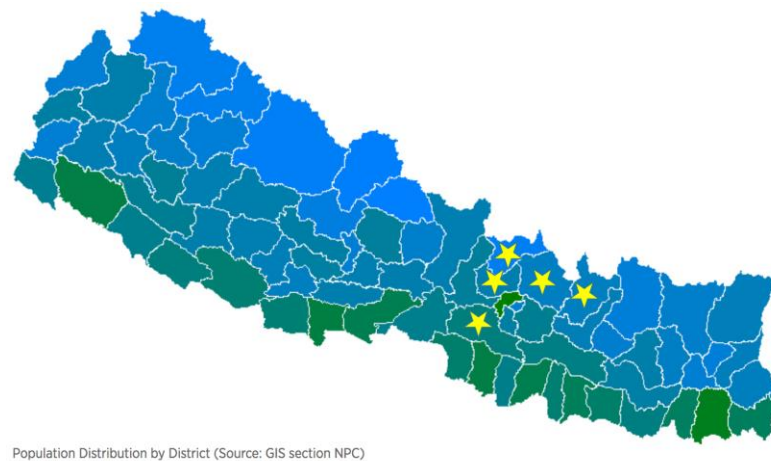


Figure 2. A population density map of Nepal, by district. Stars added by me. Source adapted from: (National Planning Commission, 2018).

Due to the nature of Nepal’s open border with India, one of the most effective methods in the fight against trafficking is border monitoring. Tiny Hands Nepal has made this their main priority and focus. They believe this is the best method because of its ability to both work preventatively and actively: “the [border-monitoring method gives the] opportunity to be very strategic: stopping [trafficking] before women are exploited and while information is current, so more frequently than other methods allows them to arrest traffickers” (*brackets mine*); more than that, they emphasize this tactic because of its immense “impact on the dollar,” being able to intercept someone who is being trafficked or is at a high risk of being trafficked for 100 USD per

interception. Their belief is that awareness and rescue, while very important, present their own challenges. A journal written on this topic puts it this way:

One of the major challenges of pre-trafficking intervention is correctly identifying those individuals who are in the greatest need of awareness or prevention programs and then effectively following up on this identification by providing those things, [such as awareness programs, educational opportunities, etc.], to them. In the absence of foreknowledge about who will become a victim, a wide net must be cast in these efforts. A related problem, often recognized in regards to awareness raising in particular, is that measuring tangible results on the pre-trafficking end has proven to be exceptionally difficult...[and] while post-trafficking intervention has a clear advantage in that trafficking can be identified in all of its elements, it also suffers from significant disadvantages. The most devastating downside from the perspective of a victim is that help comes too late to avert the damage done to them and is incapable of undoing the physical and psychological effects of the exploitation they have suffered (Hudlow, 2015; *brackets mine*).

Awareness is more difficult to measure in its effectiveness, versus rescuing which is very expensive and requires a huge investment of time and work. Another point made in my interview with Tiny Hands is that when rescuing occurs, the brothels where women are found are rarely closed, which can ultimately open a vacuum for another woman to be sex trafficked – this is not to encourage organizations to stop rescuing women or to argue against the rescue of these women, but to implore them to think about long-term solutions to a multi-faceted problem facing these victims.

Tiny Hands' method of border and transit monitoring is community-based and

community-run. With eighteen primary border stations at the main border-crossings (most set on the India-Nepal border, as this is the most heavily trafficked), they employ around 100 Nepali staff members. These staff are paid to watch the migration back and forth across the border daily, looking for red flags. Although this is very subjective and by nature leads to quite a few interactions with non-trafficked persons, it has been proven to work. Tiny Hands intercepts around 100 potential victims per month. The signs of trafficking that they commonly look for are anything that looks “suspicious,” including “...young girls or boys traveling with an adult, a girl from a village looking uncomfortable in new clothes, someone who looks drugged or drowsy, or someone who looks nervous, scared, or confused” (Hudlow, 2015). This is Tiny Hands’ first step towards identifying potential victims, so they keep it very general.

If these border monitors come across any potential signs of trafficking, then the second phase begins with a conversation and a questioning protocol that staff are trained to administer. Their questioning protocol begins with the basics of where they are going and why. Their conversation “...has a range of possible follow-up questions that are designed to get past the common cover stories that traffickers coach their victims to recite and get to information that is verifiable” (Hudlow, 2015). From here, the staff infers as best they can if the situation seems suspicious, by analyzing answers to questions. Oftentimes, because the staff are all Nepali, they are able to deduce if a situation is questionable due to cultural context or answers, for example: “a man and woman traveling together who claim to be siblings but are of a different caste from one another will raise concerns” (Hudlow, 2015).

After these initial and basic questions, if the staff sees further evidence of potential trafficking, what they at this point define as a “red flag,” they will speak privately to the potential victims and their company, allowing the staff the opportunity to question them separately.

Culturally, Nepali people are generally friendly and willing to talk, so the border monitors have often found that there is compliance to be questioned. Consequently, this separate questioning tends to shed light on the realities of what may be going on to the potential victim: usually in cases of trafficking, the trafficker will become very defensive and the trafficked will be quite unsure, especially on the details of their destination (be it a promised job, employer's details, marriage, etc.).

The staff has authority to stop these victims from going on in two specific cases. The first, if a child is stopped and their parents get involved over the phone, asking the staff to intercede. The second, if the local police get involved they may choose to prevent the potential victim from continuing on. However, in the majority of situations, since the staff has no authority over those being trafficked, they do all they can to persuade them to choose not to go. If the staff have seen a pattern of red flags (which they have been trained to identify), they will express that they feel there is a potential for trafficking present, explain why, and give options to help them out of the situation.

In addition to monitoring, during the interview Tiny Hands mentioned they keep very detailed data on their encounters with these women: "There is a form collected for each intercept that occurs, giving Tiny Hands valuable information about which red flags are recurring. Also, there is a much more detailed victim interview conducted with each potential victim where there is evidence of trafficking present and they have chosen not to go. These forms are entered into a Tiny Hands database and gives staff current data and actionable steps as they seek to be data-driven in their decisions." This information also allows for Tiny Hands to more easily investigate traffickers, based on the testimonies of these potential victims, as well as their carefully documented data from each interception.

For potential victims that choose not to go, they generally return back to their homes. Additionally, most of Tiny Hand's border stations have shelters, but these are designed to be short-term solutions. If a potential victim is unable to return home due to safety reasons (which is determined by a "home situation assessment" conducted by the staff), Tiny Hands helps to find a long-term solution, oftentimes referring them to another organization's shelter. However, it should be noted that this is quite rare, due to the nature of transit monitoring – it is preventative, aiming to stop these potential victims before being exploited, and very few women require extensive rehabilitation or counseling, which is more necessary post-rescue. After a woman returns home or to a long-term solution, Tiny Hands attempts to follow-up with them, through a phone call. This is to ensure everything is okay after the border experience and that reintegration has been smooth.

Each border station is overseen by a subcommittee, made up of a group of volunteers from the local community. The subcommittee gives Tiny Hands local leadership as they oversee the work of the station, putting in final requests to local authorities, accounting for staff time, and setting the priorities of each station (since they are from that area). All of this is, in part, to establish the integrity of the border staff and to prevent corruption by enforcing accountability, but mainly because Tiny Hands needs local leadership at these border stations. Also, this subcommittee allows for sustainability in Tiny Hands' operations, as well as a more collaborative and unified relationship with the local police forces and authorities.

Maiti-Nepal also does border monitoring, following similar procedures to Tiny Hands' methods; however, the specifics were not explicitly mentioned, because they focus heavily on other areas. Below (Figure 3) is an example of a transit monitoring station operated by Maiti-Nepal.



Figure 3. The picture was taken at one of Maiti-Nepal's transit monitoring stations, where two people were stopped, separated, then questioned. Source adapted from: (Aldama, Z., 2018).

The other two parts of prevention, awareness programs and advocacy, were consistently the main focus of prevention for the remaining organizations. The rest of this section will outline the different strategies used by these organizations; in particular, community mobilization and awareness programs, job-skills training and economic empowerment, and advocating for these victims by appealing to the Nepali government were mentioned.

Maiti-Nepal's community mobilization is divided into two main groups: children and adults. Their goal in these areas is to get students, teachers, and parents to prevent trafficking in a synergistic effort. For example, providing classes within schools to students to teach them why trafficking happens, how it happens, and safety tactics to be cautious against potential traffickers. A key message that they teach is to be wary of strangers – especially those coming into their communities instilling hope and giving promises of jobs abroad or marriage (as deception is the main means in Nepal by which trafficking to other countries occurs). These programs mobilize all groups at once, especially when students are encouraged to share what they have learned at

home. For children, Maiti-Nepal puts the focus of their mobilization on education; they believe staying in school helps to eliminate many forces that drive people in sex trafficking today. Education leads to job opportunities, which mitigates the desperation of poverty, the driving force that pushes these potential victims to accept false job and marriage promises. For adults, Maiti-Nepal puts the focus on income-generating activities. In particular, they give adult women training in different jobs (sewing, tailoring, agriculture, cooking, etc.).

Saathi Nepal implements similar programs, referring to them as “economic empowerment programs.” They recognize that, in Nepal, the opportunities for women are very limited (due to a patriarchal mindset), so many women work from home; it is very difficult for women to leave their houses, so Saathi Nepal works with the women in this situation. They enable the women to work from home to produce different handicrafts, augmenting their skills to create jewelry or produce marketable goods that can then be sold. Also, in these markets, there is frequently a middle man between the home-based worker and the consumer, and generally this middle man exploits the worker and pockets the majority of the profit. Saathi Nepal cuts out the middle men, minimizing the exploitation of these women; they “organize these women into groups so they have a voice and can’t be manipulated as individuals.”

In terms of awareness programs, the organizations interviewed lead the charge. Saathi Nepal has “project-based programs,” running programs centered around certain topics for short stints, before moving onto another topic. In 2004 and 2005, they began working with women in Nepal’s entertainment sector (where, according to CWIN, 30% are exploited sexually) and began a program geared towards sex trafficking. Saathi Nepal does not believe in a thin veil of awareness over a wide berth. Instead, they work with local organizations in specific communities (they have worked in 15-18 districts as of the publishing of this paper) as consultant partners to

strengthen their capacity. These capacities being financial support, accuracy in empirical data reporting, or getting their standards of fighting these injustices up to fiscal donors' requirements. They take donor's money and invest it into grassroots organizations, equipping these organizations with the tools they need to be sustainable after Saathi Nepal fades to the background, before they begin a new project elsewhere. One particular triumph for Saathi Nepal (and for the fight against trafficking) was seeing several areas where they had previously invested in to be declared child marriage and child labor free.

CWIN also works with communities, focusing on child protection by working with child development and advocacy; they have worked in more than 26 districts, running these community programs. They target child labor, child marriage, and child trafficking in their awareness programs. In particular, they listen to the concerns and ideas from children themselves (as well as their teachers and caregivers), collecting their ideas and consolidating them. Once this happens, CWIN juxtaposes the expressed ideas with the Nepali government's legislations and Nepal's constitution, analyzing the gap between what the children face day-to-day with what the legislations outline, and how they are actually implemented. CWIN worked to amend the anti-trafficking act to include the protection of children; "it did not include a separate provision for the prosecution or rehabilitation of children that were victims of sex trafficking, separate from the provisions of women – and children need separate attention/needs than women do." They fought for this and, six years ago, a national plan of action to amend the anti-trafficking act was called, with CWIN invited to the meeting. Once again, a victory.

A unique means of spreading awareness, mentioned only in the interview with Saathi Nepal, was Saathi Nepal's use of campaigns and appealing to national role models. Several years ago, they began working with national football players, seeking them out to endorse the

campaigns that spoke out against domestic violence and sex trafficking. It was found to be effective because of these national figure's widespread fame, particularly their impact on Nepal's youth. They have since continued to employ this tactic.

WOREC also mobilizes a unique approach in their fight against trafficking. As aforementioned, WOREC believes the heart of the issue of sex trafficking is the violation of women's rights. They have corroborated this belief through extensive research. In addition to this, they have also found that, in order for women to work abroad, they must travel surreptitiously so as not to be found out. They are forced to do this due to strict migration laws and bans on women's travel for domestic work imposed by Nepal's government, passed in an effort to discourage women from traveling to countries where sex trafficking frequently occurs, as outlined by an excerpt from an article published by the Nepali Times:

After high profile cases of abuse of Nepali domestics, the government has banned women from migrating for domestic work since early 2017. But outlawing it has driven recruitment underground, increasing the exploitation and risk for Nepali women.

Women are still finding unauthorized ways to get to West Asia overland through India, or taking circuitous flights via Sri Lanka. Many end up being trafficked en route, and are abused or underpaid by employers. (Khadka, 2018).

Thus, they became one of the first anti-trafficking organizations to introduce safe migration advocacy programs as a means to fight trafficking, making labor rights and women's rights to mobility their focal point. On top of this, they helped to pioneer survivor-of-trafficking-led organizations and have helped to change national laws (through lobbying), implementing changes which orbit around domestic violence laws, women's property rights, and safe abortion tactics.

Rescue

Maiti-Nepal is the main organization involved that is associated with rescuing; however, CWIN, in partnership with Child Helpline 1098 (this is an international organization implemented by CWIN in Nepal), also carries out rescues.

Maiti-Nepal rescues girls predominantly from India, working in conjunction with other NGOs and INGOs there, as well as with the local Indian authorities. Who they collaborate with is dependent on the location of the rescue. The largest cities in India where girls are extracted from include Mumbai, Delhi and Calcutta (the largest and most heavily populated cities in India). If a rescue is made in a different country, particularly those in the Middle East, Maiti-Nepal generally works with the Nepal embassy there to run operations. They claim about 200-300 rescues per year from India alone.

The rescues are very difficult, because they require an ongoing large supply of resources, dedication, and honesty from everyone involved. Rescue is incredibly important, but it is also generally very demanding and challenging, and is therefore something that cannot be done at will: there are set guidelines and timelines that must be followed with each rescue. On top of this, in cases of adult rescue, the adult must give their consent before they can be brought back to Nepal.

Maiti-Nepal's initial step in the rescue process is receiving a missing person's application; they will keep this application for up to four months before they discontinue the search for the person(s) involved. The timeline for a rescue depends on how long it takes to locate the person in the country to which they were trafficked. Once they are located, they begin the task of contacting the necessary people (the local authorities) in that region to extract the redeemed to bring them back to Nepal. After they rescue them out of the trafficking situation,

those rescued will oftentimes have to stay in India for several days to begin the legal process. After a few days, they are brought to Maiti-Nepal's headquarters in Kathmandu where they are put in a shelter and the rest of the legal proceedings are taken care of. The minimum cost for each one of these rescues is 200,000 rupees (roughly 2,000 USD).

Similarly, CWIN works with local authorities and other anti-trafficking organizations when the rescue occurs outside of Nepal's borders. However, they receive most of their missing person reports through a phone call to Child Helpline 1098 or a referral from a person close to the victim (a teacher, a family member, etc.). If they are informed of a child trafficking case, they inform the police, mentioning in the interview that "Every time we have informed the police, they have come 100% of the time." The Child Helpline (operated by CWIN in Nepal) has offices in five out of seven provinces in Nepal: provinces one, three, four, five, and seven. At each of these locations, they employ a counselor, a social worker, and a rescue team; the helpline is a toll-free number with 12 hours of availability per day. CWIN has a collaboration with Child Helpline International in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.

After Child Helpline receives a referral, they use a set questionnaire and determine if the child is a native Nepali (they also determine this through the use of the child's language and cultural norms). If this is the case, the children are retrieved/brought to Nepal through the cooperation of the organizations involved. The child will stay for around a week's length at the facility where the initial call came in. Here, they are provided a counselor; if the child needs more psychological attention, CWIN refers them to a psychiatrist. Generally, since a trafficking case is considered very serious, they will also have "legal and livelihood support," although a lawyer is not on standby at these centers like the rescue team or the counselor, so CWIN coordinates with other organizations to focus on the legal action. After this week, a trusted

member of the child's community comes to the center and the child will be reintegrated back into their community and respective home, depending on the gravity of the case.

If the child is unable to return home, they are placed in the childcare homes run by CWIN. These homes are long-term solutions, whereas the Child Helpline facilities are short-term. If CWIN's capacity is full, they will refer the child to another shelter run by various anti-trafficking organizations.

Rehabilitation

The organizations involved in sheltering women and children coming out of trafficking all stated that they have rehabilitation programs, both short-term recovery shelters and programs and long-term shelters; there was not a huge difference between these various organizations' implementation of the rehabilitation programs. The main organizations involved in this part of the three main anti-trafficking efforts are Maiti-Nepal, CWIN, and Saathi Nepal.

Maiti-Nepal does employ a long-term shelter for children; however, for the purpose of my research, I will focus on the women's shelters used for sex trafficking victims. In this case, the homes are always a temporary placement. These women stay in these safe houses/rehabilitation homes until their legal case is finalized, around five to six months. If a woman is unable to go home, and therefore must stay for longer than six months, they are allowed to extend their stay with the intent of being reintegrated. During this time, in addition to legal handlings, the women receive counseling and job skills training.

The extent of counseling depends on the severity of psychological harm. Women struggling with severe depression, mania, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder, will receive specialized psychiatric treatment. Maiti-Nepal estimates that 35% of the women that come out of sex trafficking (and are taken in by Maiti-Nepal) suffer from severe post-traumatic

stress disorder. Women are provided counseling at the beginning of their stay, as an integrated part of their rehabilitation, but is provided longer on an as-need-basis to them.

In addition to counseling, a core part of Maiti-Nepal's rehabilitation process is their job-skills training. In fact, they often find that very few of the victims referred to them return to sex work because this training proved to be very successful. They offer training in a wide variety of arenas, including hotel management, housekeeping, tailoring, agriculture, and culinary arts. Likewise, CWIN has a program dubbed "Self-Reliance," in which they also teach job skills. It is founded on the same building blocks as Maiti-Nepal's.

Saathi Nepal's first shelter was opened in 1995 with the purpose of providing safety to women that were victims of domestic violence. Today, these victims are still their main focus, although in 1998 they began to expand their focus, and today they also provide their services and shelters to victims of sex trafficking. There are now five shelters for children, housing over 200. These children's shelters are completely long-term; Saathi Nepal doesn't believe in "reintegrating" them, but rather chooses to focus on keeping and helping them until they are able to live independently. Saathi Nepal usually commits to nurturing the children that they take in until after the children become adults and/or leave at the end of their university schooling. Most of the children are orphans, conflict-affected (abused and exploited, sexually or physically), or both. All of these children's shelters are located in Kathmandu and have no vacancies.

Saathi Nepal has four women's shelters: "one in Kathmandu, holding twenty women, one in Kapilvastu, holding ten women, one in Nepalgunj holding fifteen women, and another in [indistinguishable place] holding fifteen, so seventy women in total" (*brackets mine*). However, Saathi Nepal will sometimes take on a few past their holding capacity, should extreme need arise. The women who are victims of sex trafficking are generally referred to Saathi Nepal,

through the local police, hospitals, and the national women's commission. These women's shelters are designed to house the victims for up to six months; if the victims are processing the legalities of their case or are having difficulties finding stability and getting on their feet, they are allowed to stay up to two years. However, unlike Maiti-Nepal, Saathi Nepal does not handle the legal proceedings of the victims referred to them; they work in conjunction with the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), assigning these legal cases to this organization for them to process.

When these women arrive at the shelters, they are given counseling on an as-needed-basis (although Saathi Nepal does not take extreme cases of psychological trauma), job skills training if desired, and awareness programs. These awareness programs are designed to teach the women about hygiene, reproductive health, and early pregnancy education. This is vital to empowering them, as it is rather nonexistent nationally throughout Nepal. These shelters are Saathi Nepal's core focus, and whether or not there is adequate funding, the shelters continue to stay open and running, to provide solace to women and children seeking refuge from a wide array of abuses and injustices.

Analysis

As a whole, one of the largest difficulties victims of sex trafficking face is reintegration into their home communities. Culturally, they are shunned and frequently held at fault for what they have been through, or seen as dirty and used. Maiti-Nepal believes that "[These women] must be economically independent and strong, then the stigma is gradually reduced" (*brackets mine*). There is a fatalistic mindset that runs very deep in Nepali culture, and it bleeds into the stigmatization of women coming out of sex trafficking. Studies have shown that because this stigma makes full reintegration almost impossible for a number of sex trafficking victims, they

will return to sex work out of economic desperation. Thus, this stigmatization perpetuates a vicious cycle of exploitation and a violation of human rights. Although this is still incredibly pervasive, it is slowly fading as Nepali society becomes more liberal-minded and it is an issue more anti-trafficking organization are making a priority to address.

The largest overwhelming problem that the organizations themselves consistently face is funding, because they predominantly rely on international donors for a majority of their income. The Nepali government gives aid as well, although it is very minimal. So, this problem becomes two-fold: first, a lack of support from within and, second, an underlying current of competition between anti-trafficking organizations vying for funds from international donors. This, in turn, shifts the focus from a fight against trafficking to battling for money. Without an ample amount of funds, these organizations are unable to expand their efforts to meet the needs of more victims, nor are they able to sustain long-term solutions – which do not exist in abundance, as is. Also, rescue has proven to be very expensive as well, limiting this part of fighting against trafficking to only the organizations that can afford it. There needs to be heavier involvement and collaboration from all involved parties inside Nepal's borders: the organizations working with and alongside one another, and financial support and implementation of policy change by the Nepali government.

Finally, as research has proven through the display of combating numbers, demands for well-documented use of funds, fiscal accountability within these organizations, and up-to-date reports on Nepali people as a whole in order to have more accurate measures of the breadth of the sex trafficking industry are needed. These elements all help to encourage an atmosphere of trust between participants and partners to foster the success of the mission at hand. The focus must remain on these victims and rescuing them from the injustices they endure daily.

Conclusion

Although Nepal is one of the most exploited sources for the South Asian (and the world's) sex trafficking industry, it has a legion of anti-trafficking organizations at war, fighting against this injustice through a number of prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation methods. In transit and border monitoring, Tiny Hands Nepal and Maiti-Nepal lead the charge; in awareness programs, economic empowerment, and advocacy Maiti-Nepal, CWIN, Saathi Nepal, and WOREC are on the front lines; in rescue, Maiti-Nepal and CWIN are taking up arms; and in rehabilitation and sheltering of victims, Maiti-Nepal, CWIN, and Saathi Nepal are storming the battlefield. These organizations have made it their mission to speak out for the rights of the individuals, especially the women and children affected by this exploitive industry.

Understanding the nature of sex trafficking in the context of the culture of Nepal as well as the methods employed by these anti-trafficking organizations allows for a comprehensive understanding of how to prevent the spread, lessen the prevalence, and limit the sustainability of sex trafficking within and outside of Nepal.

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